

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
LEGACY PROJECT**

MEMOIRIST: LUCY CARSON
INTERVIEWERS: JOHN KENT
RUTH EINSTEIN
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin Disc 1>

John: Let's start with the basics: when and where you were born and what your original name was.

Lucy: I was born . . . on my birth certificate it says Louiza Rosenblith.

John: Please spell it.

Lucy: R-o-s-e-n-b-l-i-t-h. My father's name was Berl Rosenblith, and my mother's name was Machla Strikler Rosenblith. They were originally from Poland. They immigrated to Antwerp, Belgium, where I was born.

John: Do you know why? Just briefly.

Lucy: Why? I think that [it was] probably better opportunities and some of the family lived there already. My father had gone to France and studied in France. I had an uncle there that was in the diamond business. My father learned how to be a diamond cleaver. Also they had a men's store, where they sold all kinds—a big store—and three family members ran the store.

John: The name of the store?

Lucy: The name of the store? I don't remember that, but it was 73 Pelikaanstraat in Antwerp.¹

John: Good memory.

¹ Pelikanstraat is a main thoroughfare in Jootsewijk, a traditionally Jewish neighborhood not far from the Central railway station and the so-called "Diamond District" in downtown Antwerp, Belgium.

Ruth: Right under the railroad tracks, in the middle of downtown Antwerp. I really don't remember much about my childhood. Why, I don't know, but I don't. All I remember is a happy home. I lived there with my mother and father. We had family . . .

John: Any brothers or sisters?

Lucy: That came later.

John: When were you born?

Lucy: On July 24, 1931. That made me nine years old when the war began. I thought I was seven . . . nine . . . in 1931 in May, so I wasn't quite nine. The war started in May of 1940.² I remember just picking up one suitcase with just a few things we could carry with us, and just leaving with some other members of the family.

John: What do you remember about your parents—to give us a sense of what kind of people they were?

Lucy: [They were] very loving people. I especially remember my father playing with me. As far as: did I go to school [and] what I did . . . really, it's always puzzled me why I wouldn't remember happy times. You know people do remember when they are seven years old. I remember my cousin Regina and playing with her all the time. She had a lot of dolls in her house. We lived in an apartment. I think she had a house. I remember going to the park, but very vague things, nothing specific except that I was happy. Then in May of 1940 all hell broke loose. All of a sudden planes were overhead, just full of planes overhead. That's when we decided to evacuate to France with several members of the family.³

John: Do you remember who the others were?

Lucy: Yes, there were aunts, Regina and her parents, and Susie Tibor, and Regina Rosenfelder, and my Aunt Sabine, and my aunt Helly and her two boys, and that's about it. Yes, there were three aunts. We got on a cattle car, a coal car, where there was no top. We just stood inside the cattle car. It went very slowly because as soon as we heard a plane, the train stopped and we had

² German troops invaded Belgium on May 10, 1940. By the end of the month, the entire country was occupied.

³ Seventeen family members including Lucy, her mother (who was about seven months pregnant), and her father left Belgium in May 1940. Lucy's family travelled with her father's aunt and uncle (whom Lucy refers to as her Grandfather) and their three daughters (whom Lucy calls "aunts") with their husbands and children. Only the eight children (Lucy, six of her second cousins, and her baby sister), the three "aunts," and Lucy's great uncle survived.

to get off the train. [We had to] either hide underneath the train or in the bushes if that was available and return back on the cars, on those trains, after the planes—I assume they were German planes—left. It took us almost eight days to get from Antwerp to a place called Camp [Château de] Frémont.⁴ Why there, I don't know. That was a detention center, some kind of a camp.

John: Do you remember anything about what your parents were telling you as to what was going on?

Lucy: No, really not. I just remember being scared. I remember looking back, the city of Mons [Belgium] was burning when we left. It was just a terrifying experience. I don't even remember how we got to eat or where. We must have gotten food from somewhere. Anyway, we wound up in this camp—it was held by the French—that was surrounded with barbed wires. I vividly remember that the men and the women were separated. The place where we slept was like a barn, because we slept on . . . there was straw on the floor. We slept on the straw, and . . . we didn't know . . . I didn't understand what was going on . . . it was just scary.

John: What language did you speak at that time?

Lucy: At that time, because of the family we spoke Flemish,⁵ we spoke Yiddish,⁶ and we spoke German among the family at that time. It wasn't until we hit France that we learned French. One day, for no reason given, the gates were opened up and everybody started walking out. We walked to a small village called Vicq . . . V-i-c-q . . . in the Department of Allier where the Vichy government was ruling.⁷ It was a tiny, tiny little town. They gave us a house. As a matter

⁴ Chateau de Fremont is an estate outside of Vallon-en-Sully, in central France. It is about 590 kilometers southwest of Antwerp and about 280 kilometers southeast of Paris. In May 1940, it became an internment camp for the influx of foreign Jews that had come to the area. By June, approximately 480 people were housed there. The family was imprisoned there for two months until August 1940.

⁵ Flemish refers to the region, culture, and people of western Belgium rather than a language or dialect, although there are some slight differences from the French language in pronunciation, lexicon, and expressions.

⁶ Yiddish is the common historical language of Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. It is heavily Germanic based but uses the Hebrew alphabet. The language was spoken or understood as a common tongue for many European Jews up until the middle of the twentieth century.

⁷ Vicq is a village in central France, in an area that fell under the control of the Vichy government, known officially as the French State (*État français*). After the Germans invaded France in May 1940, an armistice signed in June divided France into two zones: the northern and western parts of the country were under German military occupation and the southern part of the country was left under French sovereignty (the Vichy government). Under German auspices, the Vichy regime nominally controlled all of France, even after the Germans broadened their occupation to include the southern areas, in November 1942. Although it was officially neutral, Vichy France collaborated closely

of fact, they gave us two houses to live in in the middle of the town. The town, which was the length of this street over here. <points to indicate the street outside her house> We stayed there . . . I don't remember the length of time, but it was okay. The villagers were very accepting. They helped us out quite a bit.

Then the French capitulated and so they were afraid to have Jews in the town.⁸ Right away they took the men—all the men of the family—and they picked them up and they took them to Correze [French: Corrèze] . . . to a camp called *Groupe de travailleurs étrangers* [French: foreign workers group], which translates as “foreign workers.” They were sent there. That was the last we saw of all the men in the family.

John: Were all the people originally on the train Jews or a mix of everybody?

Lucy: [They] must have been. I really don't know. I would assume so. They wouldn't leave Antwerp and they wouldn't leave Belgium unless they had to. Where the rest of them went, why we walked to Vicq of all places, I don't know. It got to the point where it was too dangerous for us to stay in the village. There was . . . an abandoned railroad station outside of this small village [Vicq] called *La Gare* [French: train station]. It was really in the middle of nowhere. I have a photograph of it. It's in the countryside, near nothing. We moved there—all of us—just the women and the children. We had three aunts, grandpa and two, four . . . five children. That's where we hid. We survived there because we grew potatoes. There was . . . we had a couple of chickens the farmers had given us, so we had eggs. Where we got the rest, I really don't know. We did . . . my cousin, Regina and I, would run into the city and the baker of the town would give us one of those . . . French bread is in a round loaf and you put your arm around it, and she and I would put an arm [around] that loaf of bread and run back quick. We did get some help from some of the farmers around us. One of the main things I remember was: there was an

with Germany. The Vichy government was complicit with German racial policies, aiding and cooperating with the detainment and deportation of Jews from both occupied and unoccupied France.

⁸ In the summer and fall of 1940, Vichy administrators promulgated antisemitic legislation that particularly affected foreign Jews. French authorities interned thousands of Jews in detention camps under deplorable conditions, where at least 3,000 died during the war. Lucy's father, two of his cousins' husbands, and one of his nephews were arrested in June 1941. They spent the next year at a camp near Soudeilles, a small town in the administrative department of Correze [French: Corrèze] in southwestern France. During that time, Berl worked as an agricultural worker in a nearby town called Floressas. Throughout the summer of 1942, German officials and French police to conduct round-ups of Jews in both the occupied and unoccupied zones of France. In August 1942, the men were all transferred to Drancy and then deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Only Lucy's second cousin, Wilhelm (Willy) Rosenbluth survived the war.

apple tree. That apple tree was like manna from heaven, believe me.⁹ We would wait every morning, get up, and see whether an apple fell down so we could split it up between all of us. It was just . . . it was the most delicious thing that we had at the time. I remember—I mean crazy—when you grow potatoes, you had these bugs that eat the leaves, called the *doryphore* [potato bug] in French. We were so afraid that something would happen to these precious potatoes that Regina and I, and the cousins, we would pick those bugs, we put them on the railroad tracks, and, with a brick, we would kill them. That's what we played. That was hard there.

John: Was there any news at all from the outside at the time?

Lucy: No, I don't remember . . . we were nowhere, in no man's land somehow. It was at that time—my mother was pregnant when the war started—and it was at that time that my sister was born. There was no hospital in Vicq. She had to walk to Ebreuil [France], which is a small village [3 kilometers or 2 miles] away from Vicq. She started walking, but I understand that a farmer picked her up and drove her to the hospital there. That's where my sister was born.

John: And her name?

Lucy: Her name is Beatrice Marianne Rosenblith. She was born August 15 [1940]. She was born in a Catholic hospital. August 15 is the Immaculate Conception, a very important Catholic holiday.¹⁰ The sisters really wanted to have her be named Mary, so she [my mother] compromised with Marianne.

John: Your father was off in another camp of some kind?

Lucy: My father was gone. By that time he was already taken. He was really taken from the beginning on, in the early 1940's. After that . . . it really . . . we had to move from Occupied France to Unoccupied France.¹¹ That department [where] Vicq [was]—was already too close to

⁹ In the Hebrew Bible, manna is described as an edible substance that G-d provided for the Israelites during their travels in the desert.

¹⁰ Lucy is referring to The Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven rather than the Immaculate Conception. Celebrated every year on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary commemorates the death of Mary and her bodily assumption into Heaven. It is one of six Holy Days of Obligation, when Catholics are obliged to participate in Mass. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception is also one of the Holy Days of Obligation and is celebrated on December 8.

¹¹ In September 1942, the Vichy government had expelled all foreign Jews from the Allier department. The women and children at *La Gare* had been served an eviction notice and it was clearly becoming to dangerous to remain in the area. Although technically it remained under Vichy regime, by that November, the Germans broadened their occupation to include even the southern areas of France.

Vichy and we had to leave. We had to go into hiding somehow. Betty was about one year old by that time, maybe not quite a year old. It was decided that the women would go into hiding. How their places were chosen, I don't know. It was decided that my mother would take Betty—she was too little—and take the train in Limoges [France]. There she would get off the train and hand my sister over to . . . we presume now that it was an OSE [*Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants*] representative.¹² She would take Betty and put her into a family that would care for her during the war. She remained there the whole war.¹³

My mother lingered one minute too long on the platform in Limoges. I know that as a fact, because Grandpa was also [there]. They were both going to a place of hiding. He was on the train and she was picked up and sent to Drancy.¹⁴ We got a card from Drancy and then Auschwitz-[Birkenau].¹⁵ That was the last I saw of my mother. That left us kids. They felt that the kids had a chance because by that time we already spoke the language, we had no accents, [and] we didn't need a passport with the word "Jew" on it. It was easy for us to pass as [non-Jews], to go about with a new identity. The object was to separate the parents from the kids. The parents had—with their passports and their accents and not knowing French—they had no chance, so they went into hiding.

¹² After the German invasion of France, efforts were made by various groups to hide Jewish children. Wherever possible, efforts were made to send them on to safety in other countries such as Switzerland and the United States. One of the most active organizations in this effort was *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* [French: Children's Relief Work, or OSE], a French Jewish humanitarian organization that saved hundreds of refugee children during World War II. OSE is a worldwide Jewish organization for health care and children's welfare. It was founded in Russia in 1912 and transferred to France in 1933. OSE gave assistance to children and adults in as many as fifteen towns and the internment camps in southern France. After the German movement into southern France, OSE went underground but continued to hide children and transfer them to Switzerland when that was possible. Overall, it was possible for OSE to rescue more than 5,000 children. Some of the children were French but many were refugees that had come from Germany, Belgium, Austria, Poland and other European countries.

¹³ According to OSE records, Beatrice was temporarily sent to the Pouponniere children's home in Limoges, France in November 1942. The Pouponniere was a children's home in Limoges, France operated by the OSE and the Assistance Medicale aux Enfants de Refugies [French: Medical Aid for Refugees' Children] from late 1940 to 1943. Other sources suggest Beatrice was then transferred to a home in Châtillon-sur-Indre, a small town in central France, where she stayed for the rest of the war.

¹⁴ The Drancy internment camp was an assembly and detention camp for confining Jews who were later deported to the extermination camps during the German military administration of Occupied France. It was located in a northeastern suburb of Paris. Between June 1942 and July 1944, 67,400 French, Polish and German Jews were deported from the camp in 64 rail transports. Lucy's mother arrived in Drancy in October 1942.

¹⁵ Auschwitz-Birkenau was a network of camps built and operated by Germany just outside the Polish town of Oswiecim (renamed 'Auschwitz' by the Germans) in Polish areas annexed by Germany during World War II. It is estimated that the SS and police deported at a minimum 1.3 million people (approximately 1.1 million of which were Jews) to the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex between 1940 and 1945. Camp authorities murdered 1.1 million of these prisoners. Lucy's mother was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau in November 1942.

One morning, still at *La Gare*, the train station, a young man dressed as a Boy Scout came and picked us five kids up. Betty was already gone. He said, “We’re going camping.” We went all the way to Grenoble [France], but I can’t . . . Grenoble is quite a distance from Vicq.¹⁶ I certainly don’t remember taking a train, because trains were so dangerous. I can’t imagine walking, but we got to Grenoble. I really don’t remember how. There, we were put in a Catholic convent in the heart of Grenoble, the middle of Grenoble.¹⁷ It was run by sisters. It had tall brick walls, surrounded by walls, and it was really a place where I went . . .

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Lucy: I apologize. We went somewhere else first. The Boy Scout took us to Brout-Vernet [France], which is another small town.¹⁸ The place was a summer camp at one time—it must have been a summer camp—and that’s where we went into hiding. It was run by Orthodox rabbis. That was really the first time we all were separated from the parents. We were all on our own. This camp, the home . . . that’s when food was scarce. We all slept in dormitories-style bedding, one room [with] one bed next to the other. The worst part of there is that we had so much lice. I distinctly remember opening up the bed and seeing lice in the beds . . . there’s nothing you can do about it.

John: What was it like sleeping with them?

Lucy: You learned to adapt. Nothing you can do. Regina was the one that really had it the worst. She had it so bad that they had to shave her hair. It was so bad. It [the lice] was everywhere. You didn’t have medicine or any provisions to take care of things like that. But by

¹⁶ Grenoble is a city in the Rhône-Alpes region of southeastern France, near the border of Switzerland. It is approximately 270 kilometers (168 miles) southeast of Vicq, France.

¹⁷ A group of nuns that belonged to the order of Our Lady of Saint Sion came to Grenoble in September 1940. The nuns had been evacuated from Strasbourg, where they were teachers. In Grenoble, they rented several apartments and opened a boarding school, which enabled them to hide several Jewish children. Two brothers who had converted from Judaism founded the order in France in the mid-nineteenth century “to witness in the Church and in the world that God continues to be faithful in love for the Jewish people and to hasten the fulfillment of the promises concerning the Jews and the Gentiles.”

¹⁸ Brout-Vernet [French: Broût-Vernet] is a small town in the Allier department in central France. It is around 17 kilometers (11 miles) northeast of Vicq, France. Château des Morelles is a nineteenth century home built near Brout-Vernet. Rabbi Zalman Schneerson was the head of the Paris de l’Association des Israélites Praticants [French: the Paris Association of Jewish Practitioners, or AIP]. In cooperation with the *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (OSE), he had opened Château des Morelles as a home for Jewish children. During the war, it housed 340 children—as many as 100 at once. The children slept in at least four dormitories—two for the girls and two for the boys. One report calculates that some 340 children stayed at the castle between 1939 and 1944. On November 2, 1943, the steward was arrested and, along with his two young children, deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The staff then decided to disperse and hide the rest of the children. Most survived the war. The home officially closed February 4, 1944.

the same token, there is where I got really a good Jewish education. We did not study any . . . we only studied, only Jewish education: *Chumash* [Torah], and Hebrew, and everything else. We spent our whole day studying. I think that all that instilled faith in G-d. That part was . . . it instilled a very powerful belief in G-d to me. Then one day, the impossible happened. In the middle of the night, they told half the children to pack up their belongings, get dressed, and they had to leave immediately. About half the home left that night, immediately. It wasn't until years later that I found out that the other half [and] the rabbis and the staff, they didn't make it. As far as I know, none of those children survived. We were blessed. I mean, by mere hours from what I understand, ours was the part that were saved.

John: Do you know why the others didn't leave? [cross talk] Even if you only learned years later?

Lucy: Because they couldn't transport so many kids at one time. It had to be ten at a time with somebody, twenty at a time with somebody, and the staff remained. I wouldn't be surprised that somebody reported them. From what I later on heard, is that they came to the home and searched the home. The kids were hidden. Then . . . they came back an hour later and found them. That was the end of that. It was from there that I went to Brout-Vernet. No, this was Brout-Vernet.

<break in tape>

Lucy: The place, this chateau was called "Le Château des Morelles." That was in Brout-Vernet.

John: About what year and what season, roughly?

Lucy: Brout-Vernet was in August of 1942.

John: That's a good two years or so into your experience.

Lucy: Yes. From there I went to Grenoble [France], where a convent was. The convent was a place where you should have felt the safest, because . . . we were like in a prison—nobody came in, nobody came out. To me, it was very, very devastating. It was very devastating because—I think that this was almost the most devastating period only because it was more of an emotional type of fear. When we arrived there, I arrived with a group of 20 children. At the time, they gave me a choice of whether I wanted to go with Regina and all of them [and] leave again the following day, or remain there and they would come back in a few days, pick me up and take me

to my sister. I chose to go with, to reunite myself with the family that my sister was in. Anyway . . . the days were spent sewing, because that was the sisters' means of support. They were doing sewing—lingerie sewing—and they had children there that boarded. It was like a boarding school, but they lived there. It's not as if they went out. Those kids lived there. It was Hail Mary's every hour, every time the clock rang, every hour on the hour was a Hail Mary—prayer on the morning, prayer on the night. I'm puzzled to this day why it was so hard for me to be able to say that. I felt so strongly that I remember saying the *Shema* every night before I went to sleep.¹⁹ But the worst, the most devastating part was that weeks became months and months became G-d knows how long. I really, really thought that I was forgotten, that I was absolutely forgotten. There was no way anybody was going to know that I was here—no way. My parents were gone. Regina didn't know where I was. Who would find me? The thought of living for the rest of my life there . . . was a lot to handle. The sisters were good. I don't know whether there were other Jewish children there left after that [or whether] I was the only one or not, but I knew that I had to pretend to be a good Catholic girl. I knew my life depended on that. I couldn't take the chance.

John: At the time, did you have any particular belief as to what the difference was between Jews and non-Jews, or what the relationship was, or should be?

Lucy: I felt so strong about Judaism that it just didn't matter. I wanted nothing to do with Catholics. I just didn't want to. I went through the motions. The sisters, if you behaved, they would give you cards of saints—like you have baseball cards. What did I do with these cards? I exchanged them for bread. These kids really valued these cards. Depending on who was on that card, you got one or two slices of bread. That was more important to me than the cards. It was . . . a tough experience for me. They [the OSE] finally came to pick me up.

John: Was the war at all going on in that area?

Lucy: It was very much going on.

John: Like what did you hear or see?

¹⁹ Sh'ma Yisrael or Shema Yisrael [Hebrew: Hear, [O] Israel], sometimes shortened to simply *Shema*, is the title of a prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. It is often considered the most important prayer in Judaism. The first verse affirms the monotheistic essence of Judaism.

Lucy: Yes . . . I'm glad you mentioned that. There was cobblestones. In Grenoble, you had cobblestones. You could hear the Germans march outside. You could hear them all the time. You also knew that it was just a matter of somebody says the wrong word [and] they could barge in. They were ruthless. Yes, it was living in constant fear. It was living in constant fear, definitely. We knew . . . by then I knew what was going on. Food and fear was in your mind all the time. What are you going to eat next? Where are you going to eat next? What's going to happen next? Where are you going to go next? Anyway, when they finally came and picked me up . . .

John: Who was the 'they'?

Lucy: They must have been the OSE.

John: Tell us a little bit about what that organization is and how you learned about it.

Lucy: The OSE is called "*Oeuvre de Secours des Enfants*." OSE for short. It means "To Save the Children," OSE was started, if remember correctly, in 1913 in Germany. It was started by philanthropic Jews that wanted to do . . . their main purpose was to help needy families in medical or financial purposes. They had these kids and they took them to camp in the summer time. They had established camps where the children went during the summer months. In nineteen . . . in the early 1930's—the dates may be a little off—it became not so comfortable in Germany, so the whole organization moved to France. At the time, they bought fourteen chateaus, big homes, in France, so that when the war started, the OSE reorganized themselves as an underground organization, together with the *Maquis*—the French Underground.²⁰ They had homes to bring these children, to hide these children who were in France in the unoccupied zones. That's what the Brout-Vernet and the Chateau des Morelles—and all these chateaus were originally. They were homes. From what I read, the OSE saved about six thousand children during the war. They were . . . it's an incredible . . . what they did is almost unbelievable. I think that they're all heroes, really. How they managed, from my own personal experience, to pick up a child from one place and keep track of them. Can you imagine all these children? They kept

²⁰ A band of resistance fighters in southeastern France called themselves "Maquisards," after the *maquis* (underbrush or bushes) that grew in the mountainous regions where they hid. They relied on guerrilla tactics to harass the Vichy and German occupation troops. They worked with other underground organizations and the local populace to assist the escape of downed airmen, Jews, and others pursued by the Vichy and German authorities.

track of them [and] where they were—and moved them when it became dangerous. It is unbelievable.

John: When did you get picked up and moved from that place? About what year?

Lucy: From Grenoble? In, I think in 1943. I think in 1943. Then I was on my own. They picked me up and they took me to a small village called La Sone . . . L-A . . . S-O-N-E.²¹ That was also a very, very small village. I was moved into a house, which consisted of one room downstairs, which was the living room, the dining room, the kitchen, and the bedroom of the lady that lived there, two babies and myself. Upstairs, she had a son and his wife that lived [with her]. He was part of the French Underground. Before this is over, that wife turned him in and he was executed by the Germans. Why she didn't report me, I don't know. This lady . . . took care of babies as a means of support but she was an old lady. She couldn't do it by herself, so I was the caregiver of those two babies. It's not . . . I had to go run water off a creek. This house didn't have running water or any modern facilities. There was a school across the street, but I couldn't go because she needed me to take care of the children and everything else that needed to be taken care of. But still . . . at that point, I want to add: why did she do it? Why did she take the risk? Nobody can imagine what the risk was to do this. Why did even the convent do this? Why did any of these people take such a risk? You could barely survive. I don't know whether even I could do this. You have such chaos around you, you barely have enough, you're rationed with food, [why] would you take a stranger into your house and hide them? You really risk your life. I don't say that . . . lightly. All it took is one person having a suspicion and the whole family's gone. I don't remember a place that the Germans weren't somewhere, that you didn't see them.

John: At the time, what was your hope? What did you think might happen down the road? Did you think you were going to go home eventually or what?

Lucy: You thought some more to live by day by day. You had to have the determination and think that tomorrow will be better, otherwise . . . you can't crumble. I had no idea. All I know is that I was on my own. I had to have the wits about me to take care of myself. I really think that the secret is flexibility and adaptability. You had to have the flexibility to adapt to just about any situation and adapt because you got no choice. Do the best you can even though it's not

²¹ La Sone [French: La Sône] is a small village located in southeast France. It is about 36 kilometers (22 miles) southwest of Grenoble.

pleasant. I also . . . before I continue, at the convent I was given a new name. My new name was Genevieve Risenold. The only thing that wasn't changed was my birth date. The birthplace, my name, my whole identity was changed by the time I went to La Sone. That felt funny too. I also . . . you had to learn also that you couldn't really trust anyone. You couldn't give away any secret that you were Jewish. This was a well-guarded problem.

John: Were there any incidents you remember where you had to make a decision, it wasn't just other people telling you what to do, but where you had to make a choice, make a judgment, things like that?

Lucy: I made the judgment to stay in the convent rather than have gone with my cousin. That was at the time . . . I thought that was a poor choice afterwards, because I really believed that I was in prison for life there. That, to me, was almost the worst experience for me. From there. . . La Sone . . . Later on I found out that there were several Jewish children living in that village. I went back after the war in 1985. I found that there were several Jewish children hidden in that village but of course I didn't know that at the time. From there, someone picked us up again. I went to a place called La Chaumière in Saint-Paul-en-Chablais, in the Department of Haut-Savoie [France], which is close to the Swiss border.²² It was way up in the mountains. There was nothing there. At one time it was a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients. That, to compound with the scarcity of food, was the coldest place on earth. That was the foothills of the Alps. Cold is an understatement. Because you didn't have—then it was 1945—you didn't have . . . the personnel was scarce. They didn't have enough personnel. We had, I would say that there were about 100 children there. The personnel was scarce. We had to find a solution to what to do. At the time we divided the group into three groups—the youngest, the middle, and the oldest. At thirteen, I was the oldest. As the older group, we organized all the activities and just tried to take care of the children, the younger children and all of them. The older children . . . I wanted to show you this. <picks up something off camera> The older children gave ourselves names coming from Cinderella and [Snow White and] the Seven Dwarves. We used the names of the Seven Dwarves.

²² Saint-Paul-en-Chablais is a small town in the Haute-Savoie department in the Rhône-Alpes region in southeastern France. It is on Lake Geneva, close to the border of Switzerland. It is approximately 200 kilometers (124 miles) northeast of La Sone, France. La Chaumière [French: the Cottage] was a children's home opened in Saint-Paul-en-Chablais by the Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE) to house Jewish children until more secure homes could be found. The children were scattered and the home was closed after a raid in February 1944 on another OSE home. It reopened in 1945 and became a summer camp from 1949 to 1953.

We gave—we were more than seven—we gave each the name that best suited their personality. Since I was trying to always be upbeat, they gave me the name ‘*Au Joyeuse*,’ which means happy, cheerful [in French]. I made these for all the [children]. <holds up a patch> I sewed this for everyone. It’s a patch. There is a dwarf outlined, I don’t know if you can see it. This is Cinderella and this is *Joyeuse*. We all wore this. <holds up the picture> Here is the picture of all of us, of some of the group with the little scarf and our little patch.

I think the worst part of there was that it was so cold all the time. We used to try to find a mattress that wasn’t being used and we would sleep between two mattresses to keep warm. It was also there that I got a case of bad impetigo and I was covered with sores.²³ There was no medication, so I was isolated for a period of time, until it got better. That was 1945. Also, my sister rejoined me there. After the war, we found where my sister was living and she . . . the OSE brought her to me in Saint Paul, La Chaumiere. Then in 1945, the OSE picked me up, and returned us, returned me back to Antwerp, Belgium, where I had an aunt, Aunt Sabine, who . . . she had nothing, but she took my sister and I in. She did have a house, and so the whole family— all the women had survived—moved into that one house.

John: What do you remember about when the war ended? Was there like a specific day when you got the news or what?

Lucy: No, because where Saint Paul was, you might as well have been . . . up a mountain. There was nothing there. When I went back in 1985, [to] Aix-les-Bains [France]—which is right below it, which is a famous spa area—I wanted to know where Saint Paul is and they didn’t know.²⁴ [I] had to find a bus driver, maybe somebody would know where that place was. You got no news there. We just survived. At Saint Paul, I also . . . we taught the children to say the *Shema* at night—I was really . . . I always felt that G-d was with me and that everything would be okay the next day—and the *bentshn*, and the blessings.²⁵ That was a place where you really grew up because you were on your own. You really were on your own. You could see Switzerland, because we were so up on the mountain. If you looked down at Lake Geneva, you saw

²³ Impetigo is a highly contagious skin infection that mainly affects infants and children. Impetigo usually appears as red sores on the face, especially around a child's nose and mouth.

²⁴ Aix-les-Bains is a thermal spa town on Lake Bourget in eastern France. It is approximately 120 kilometers (75 miles) southwest of Saint-Paul-en-Chablais.

²⁵ The Yiddish term “*bentshn*” refers to the *Birkat hamamzon*, a blessing that is said after a meal.

Switzerland right across in plain view. You could almost feel like you could walk over it. That was lit up and we were in the dark. I remember that.

John: When you were taken back to Antwerp, did they tell you anything about what was going on, kind of update?

Lucy: Yes, you knew it was update, but even then you still had [questions like] . . . What are we going to do? Where are we going to eat? Where are we going to stay? Everything was so . . . you had to worry about the important things. I stayed in Antwerp two years. Then I came to the United States in 1947.

John: What was happening during those two years?

Lucy: I went to a school. We went to a trade school. I learned how to be a seamstress, and how to make patterns, and how to sew. We went to a Jewish day school, the Tachkemoni.²⁶ It was . . . the homes didn't even have toilets, didn't have bathrooms. I remember on Friday we would go to the public bathhouse two blocks away to take a shower. Can you imagine this? That was after the war. That was good.

John: Did you go back to your home at that time?

Lucy: Yes. No, because my parents weren't there anymore. I lived with my Aunt Sabine. She took care of me. Only the women were left. No, once Aunt Sabine's son survived the war, but he died three years later. We weren't quite sure what the reason for that.

Ruth: Sammy?

Lucy: No, not Sammy. [It was] Willy. Then we came to the United States.

John: When did you learn about your parents?

Lucy: Right away after I got to Belgium.

John: They definitely knew or [it was] just that [they said], "We don't know where they are"?

²⁶ Religious intellectuals who believed that their children should study traditional values as well as modern science and Zionist ideas founded the first Tachkemoni school in present-day Israel in the early 1900's. By the 1930's, Tachkemoni schools had spread to Europe and were popular within the Mizrachi movement, a religious Zionist organization founded in 1902 in Vilna. Today, there are still Tachkemoni schools in Europe and Israel that offer a mix of secular and religious curricula. Antwerp's Tachkemoni School was founded in 1920 by Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel, a moderate religious Zionist.

Lucy: [They said,] “We don’t know where they are.” I pretty much wasn’t given much hope that you would find them.

John: You were pretty much an orphan at fourteen or so?

Lucy: No, before that . . . about ten. You lived through the generosity of other people. You’ve missed your childhood. You don’t know . . . people talk to me and I . . . sometimes Sam [her husband] gets together with some of his buddies and they talk about what they did as a child. [They say,] “We did this . . . We did that . . .” I can’t contribute anything . . . no birthday parties, no baking cookies with Mom, no shopping . . . unheard of. That was not part of your life. I feel like I lived through the generosity of other people. I was at their mercy . . . but I’m here today. I had a lot of determination. I was one determined kid.

John: Where did that come from?

Lucy: I don’t know. I’ve always said I had a super A personality. Nothing is too hard, nothing is too impossible . . . and you learn priorities. Some of the things that people worry about here <waves her hand and makes a look of amused disgust>

John: So you were about fifteen or sixteen when you left [Europe]?

Lucy: Yes. I was a teenager when I came here. Now, you’ve got to picture that. I was on a ship for eight days, just me and my sister—five years old. I don’t know who took care of me. Somebody met me in New York. I came down here [Atlanta]. My experience was that I learned four words of English: “attention passengers,” “upstairs,” and “downstairs.” I came in August and I went, the following week, I went to school. Can you imagine going to China, and you’ve got all these kids yakking away? You don’t know what’s going on. The food is different. Everything is so, so different. It’s a culture shock. I mean, really. You think, you go to, you’re coming to Paradise, but you have to adjust to that paradise first.

John: What did you know about America at the time? What did you imagine?

Lucy: That everything would be better. You were hoping for better. That’s about it. School was hard, because English is not an easy language. It has double, every other word has a double meaning. Consequently you’re afraid to say anything because “Oh, my gosh, I said a dirty word,” or something like that. It was hard. I took French in school to learn English. It took a

while until you felt comfortable talking. You're right at that teenage stage where girls would go to parties and this, that, and the other and I just . . . that was hard. In the beginning, they had what they called the New World Club, where all of us kids met together.²⁷ That was nice because we were among our own peers.

Ruth: What were the activities that you did with the New World Club and who organized it?

Lucy: I think it was [the Jewish] Federation that organized this.²⁸ I think Federation—it's unbelievable what they do. They take care of every facet of life and I'm proud—another reason I'm proud to be a Jew—because Jews take care of themselves. There is nothing, I think, that a Jewish person would need that she couldn't, that Federation wouldn't have a spot for you to ask and they would help you. We [The New World Club] met every weekend. We could talk our own language. We would go on picnics to Chastain – it wasn't Chastain Park, what was it? It is Chastain Park now. We would go swimming. We had dances. I was sweetheart one year. I remember that.

John: Do you remember, were you given a choice about whether to come to America or whether to stay in Europe?

Lucy: No.

John: They just told you . . .

Lucy: No. I had an aunt here and it took two years for her to make papers. I couldn't just automatic—the Polish quota was closed.²⁹ You're really not a Belgian citizen just because you were born there. You're really a Polish citizen because your parents were born in Poland. To

²⁷ The New World Club was a social club organized for young survivors and those who had fled Europe just before World War II.

²⁸ The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) represents 153 Jewish Federations and over 300 network communities, which raise and distribute more than \$3 billion annually for social welfare, social services and educational needs with the objective of protecting and enhancing the well-being of Jews worldwide. The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta is part of the JFNA.

²⁹ After the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, fewer than 6,000 Polish immigrants were admitted into the United States per year. From 1939 to 1945, the quota for Polish immigrants admitted into the U.S. had increased to 15,000 per year. Immigration restrictions were still in effect at the end of the war until President Harry S. Truman issued an executive order, the "Truman Directive," on December 22, 1945. It required that existing immigration quotas be designated for displaced persons (DPs). While overall immigration into the United States did not increase, more DPs were admitted than before. About 22,950 DPs, of whom two-thirds were Jewish, entered the United States between December 22, 1945 and 1947 under provisions of the Truman Directive. The Polish quota between 1945 and 1948 was 17,000 a year. Congressional action to increase immigration quotas did not come until 1948.

become a Belgian citizen, you needed money, which we didn't have, so I came on a stateless visa. I came to a person—an aunt—who would vouch for me, that would take care of us. That's why we came here. I had no other choice.

John: Which aunt?

Lucy: That was Aunt Esther.

John: Don't remember the last name?

Ruth: Rose?

Lucy: Yes, that was the Rose family.

John: Was that Atlanta or New York?

Lucy: Atlanta. I came . . .

John: How long did you stay in New York?

Lucy: Just to be picked up and come here. I've always been here.

John: Oh, okay.

Lucy: But you know what the hardest part . . . what the most unbelievable . . . I mean, it may sound trivial . . . I went to school. I came [to Atlanta] on a Friday and I went to school on a Monday. I mean, really no transition here. We went to the cafeteria and—I'm telling you, I can remember that today—they would eat three bites of a sandwich and the rest was thrown away. I was having a heart attack there. All that food that was being thrown away was unreal to me. That's how food affects you. I still don't throw anything out. Unless it's rotten, of course. No, that's an exaggeration. <laughing>

John: What was Atlanta like in 1947?

Lucy: It was hard, because you're at an age—you're a teenager—you're at an age that you start dating and parties. It all seemed so frivolous . . . carefree and frivolous to me. I had to worry about everything all the time and to just not . . . [the attitude seemed to be that] life was one big party. It is. You have to get used to that . . . but . . . it's a beautiful country. I'm glad I'm here. I married a wonderful husband.

John: How much did people ask you about who you were, and how you got there, and why you had that funny accent, and all that stuff?

Lucy: When I first went to school, talking French was a novelty, so that was okay. Nobody really asked what happened, where you came [from]. People did not talk about it. I didn't talk about it. Why didn't I talk about it? If I were to tell you some of these stories in more detail, I probably would have seen disbelief in somebody's eyes. I didn't want to see that. I could just imagine my son saying, "Oh, Mom, come on," or somebody saying, "You know, it can't be." That's true. You couldn't believe what you went through. Nobody could believe. [Nobody] who had a happy life over here, could believe what you went through, so . . . you don't talk about it. What was nice with me is that Regina was the same age as I am. We were always able to talk about it between ourselves. I did have a sounding board as to talk with someone. But to just talk about it? Why would you? In a way, I can understand why the Vietnam [War] veterans didn't talk about it until forty years later. Nobody would believe them that it was really so bad, because it was so bad.

John: What was the Jewish reception like—that part of America—for you?

Lucy: Very good. Very, very good. The New World Club was a constant support. I belonged to the BBG [B'nai B'rith Girls] girls.³⁰ I didn't feel that comfortable, but it was okay. It was an adjustment. It was all so strange and different, but I am so grateful to be here.

John: How did you meet "Mr. Wonderful?" How did you meet your husband?

Lucy: At work. We worked in the same place. That was glorious. My sister lived with us for several years until she married. I had three sons. My first son—my youngest—my first passed away when he was eighteen months old. Then we had Joe. His name was Bennett [the first son]. Then we had Joe, who lives in Raleigh, North Carolina. We have two grandsons with him. Then we had Dan. Dan passed away nine years ago. That's him right there. <indicates a picture off camera> That's it.

³⁰ B'nai B'rith Girls, or BBG, is the female order of the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO), a youth movement that grew out of B'nai B'rith International, a Jewish service organization. BBG was founded in 1944 for teenage Jewish girls. Chapters of girls soon sprung up throughout the United States and Canada. Today, it is an international sorority. The male brother order is the Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA).

John: Do you remember raising your kids in any particular way because of your past, like how that might have affected it?

Lucy: Yes. I've always told my son—I put a lot of thought and effort into raising my children—family is the most important thing there is, the most precious commodity you have. Always . . . we always had dinner together. Communication, sharing . . . what did you do today? What did I do today? That, to me, is what makes a family, is the sharing, and the . . .

Danny was . . . he had a genetic Jewish disease called 'dysautonomia,' which is a malfunction of the autonomic nervous system.³¹ Consequently, he needed special care. That was a special challenge because Joe was just as important as Dan . . . I raised them all . . . I'm very proud of them. I raised them great. Dan—even with all his medical problems—went to college, graduated, had a job, worked at Home Depot.³² We are proud of all of my boys and my grandsons.

John: What aspect of Jewishness did you want to convey to them?

Lucy: To have a Jewish education is very, very important. Some of my talks that I gave before and whenever I had young people as an audience, I would say how much they should value a Jewish education because it's the foundation of their life. It teaches you values. It teaches you what life is all about. To me, it's always been very, very important. We keep a kosher home.³³ We belong to Congregation Beth Jacob.³⁴ We've been a member there since the beginning. As a matter of fact, my claim to fame is that Rabbi Feldman, we were the first couple [Rabbi] Emanuel Feldman married there.³⁵ We've been a member since . . . very active there.

³¹ Familial dysautonomia is a genetic disorder that affects the development and survival of certain nerve cells. The disorder disturbs cells in the autonomic nervous system, which controls involuntary actions such as digestion, breathing, production of tears, and the regulation of blood pressure and body temperature. Treatment and prognosis vary according to the individual's symptoms and often there is no cure. Familial dysautonomia occurs primarily in people of Ashkenazi (central or eastern European) Jewish descent.

³² The Home Depot was founded in Atlanta, Georgia in 1978 by Bernie Marcus and Arthur Blank and has grown to be the largest home improvement retailer in the United States. The Home Depot operates stores in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam), all ten provinces of Canada, as well as Mexico. (2014)

³³ Kosher refers to Jewish laws that dictate how food is prepared or served and which kinds of foods or animals can be eaten.

³⁴ Beth Jacob is an Orthodox synagogue on La Vista Road in Atlanta, Georgia founded in 1942. Beth Jacob is now Atlanta's largest Orthodox congregation.

³⁵ Rabbi Emanuel Feldman is an Orthodox rabbi and Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth Jacob of Atlanta, Georgia. He led the congregation at Beth Jacob from 1952 until 1991.

John: How does the Holocaust fit into the whole Jewish scheme for you? How do you fit it in?

Lucy: There's just some things [for which] there are no answers. You can't even say why, because, why did I lose my two sons? There is no answer. Why did the Holocaust happen? I have no answer. I just have to have faith that *HaShem* [G-d] is the master and that's the way it is.

John: After the war, when all the information really came out—people probably didn't know quite as much in the middle of the war but afterwards—what was that like for you to know how close it was to you?

Lucy: I've always felt that otherwise . . . I felt like I would have rebelled at some of these instances, but I knew that you had to keep yourself in control and you had to be in charge. You had to be in charge, but you were at the mercy of everybody else. It was the wrong place, the wrong time, the wrong minute. It was all so . . . <snaps fingers to indicate quick> Coincidence? I don't know . . .

John: There's the standard question about survivors, which is: why do you suppose you managed to get through it? What does that mean to you that you did?

Lucy: Why I did? Only G-d knows. I'm grateful. I can't say . . . a lot of people have said, "I feel guilty that I survived [when] others didn't." There's nothing to feel guilty about. It wasn't my doing. It's just the way it happened.

John: When society started to really focus on this—probably twenty, twenty-five years ago, it came out of the shadows—what was that like for you that all of a sudden it's out there in the public, after thirty years of pretty much silence?

Lucy: I had focused so much on my family and on everything that was going on in my own life, that I was more preoccupied with how am I going to deal with tomorrow. I'm more of a tomorrow person than a yesterday. I couldn't change yesterday. What is the use of dwelling on it? It serves no purpose to talk about it and rehash it. Yes, you tell the story once, but to sit on it . . . you just . . . mentally that's not healthy.

John: What's your opinion on the Jewish emphasis on remembering, and commemorations, and all of that?

Lucy: It's very important. It's very important and I wish I could do it. I wish I could do it because I belong to the child survivor group here at the [Jewish] Federation [of Greater Atlanta].³⁶ There's a group—about a dozen of us—we meet once a month. We talk about our feelings, about events, and how we react to them.

John: Was there ever any way to say goodbye to your parents? Was there any kind of ritual or a place to go or anything?

Lucy: No. I have a plaque in the synagogue in their memory and that's it. I say *yizkor* [the prayer said in memory of the dead] for them, and I go to the Six Million presentation there . . .³⁷

John: Is there any anger in you?

Lucy: Anger? No, “anger” would be the wrong word. “Cheated” maybe? I feel cheated, short changed that I've lost so much. I tell you, the loss of my sons are worse than the war.

John: It must have been interesting watching your children grow up when you couldn't remember much of your own growing up. Could you vicariously learn through them?

Lucy: No. I read lots. I took the job very seriously. I don't know . . . intuition because you had life experiences, you know how to handle things better. What do you say when such and such happens? I don't know.

John: As this whole generation slowly fades away—not to be morbid—as that part of history kind of fades and somebody's going to be watching this in a museum after a while, what . . .

Lucy: It's going to be hard to believe because this generation of kids—and I'm talking about my son's children—that whole generation of the past 15 years, I think they're spoiled. They're spoiled, not because they're not . . . because they're loved. They're spoiled because—and it's not their fault—they don't know from wanting or needing. They don't know the difference.

Whatever they want, you give them. And why wouldn't you? You can afford it and it's there. So you learn, as a child, that you can't get everything and that you have to work or struggle to get

³⁶ The Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta is a supporter of the Jewish Family & Career Services of Atlanta, which hosts a Child Survivor Support Group that meets bi-monthly.

³⁷ Eternal-Life Hemshech erected a Memorial to the Six Million at Greenwood Cemetery in Atlanta, Georgia, a granite monument topped by six torches, with each torch representing 1,000,000 Jews killed in the Holocaust, on April 25, 1965. Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) ceremonies are annually held at the Memorial to the Six Million at Greenwood Cemetery.

what you need. There is a lesson to be learned . . . even if your parents, people that have gone through the [Great] Depression.³⁸ My husband, who went through the Depression, he is very conservative, too. The value of money; you don't spend if you don't have it. You don't buy everything you want to buy. There is such a thing as excess.

John: What would you hope the Jewish world learns from what happened?

Lucy: That we need to stick together. Jews need to take care of each other. We are all in this together. We've got to take care of each other. That's what we've always done through history. Otherwise you wouldn't have Federations and HIAS's [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] and all these organizations that take care of one facet or another of a person's life or emergencies.³⁹

John: Could you say anything about what it was like to go back to Europe? [Was it in] 1985 or something?

Lucy: 1985.

John: Was that the first time in forty years you had been back?

Lucy: Yes . . . my son and daughter-in-law. That's a story on its own. That is really an incredible story. My son [Joe] and daughter-in-law [Denise] wanted to go back and see where I was, and that's where we took the journey back from the beginning on, from Antwerp all the way back, to all the homes that I was in. The first place we stopped was at Vicq, that small little village, talking about forty years later. Remember, forty years later. We get out of the car, and I said, "Joe, that's the village. You see this street? That's it." It was twelve o'clock and there's nobody there [on the street]. I said, "Well, I'll show you where the school is and you'll get an idea, and then we'll drive to *La Gare*, way out there and you'll get an idea." But, we were at the car for two minutes and a man comes out of the house. He comes up to me, and he tells to me in French, "*Je sais qui vous êtes*. I know who you are." I said, "I don't think so." He says, "Yes, I remember you. I have a picture of you in my house," and he did. He was the man that lived there

³⁸ The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century.

³⁹ Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) was founded in 1881 to help the constant flow of Jewish immigrants from Russia in relocating. During and after World War II, they worked to get Jews out of Europe and to any country that would have them by providing tickets and information about visas. After the war, they assisted 167,000 Jews to leave DP camps and emigrate elsewhere.

40 years before. We lived next door to his house. I was telling Joe and Denise, “This is the kitchen and there is an outhouse in the back.” He was telling me that this woman doesn’t live there. She just comes every once in a while to look at the house, but she really doesn’t live here anymore. She lives in town. I said, “Okay, let’s go to the school. I’ll show you the school.” We walked back from the school and there’s a car in front of that house. The woman came to visit that day. This whole thing was like the twilight zone.⁴⁰ This woman came to visit there and we went into the house, and the wallpaper was the same. The only difference was that she had a new stove. You could see the difference, but the house was the same. So we got the tour of the house. Now, isn’t that a coincidence?

Next stop was La Sone, where I lived with that lady. Do you have time for me to tell you that? I had written in the beginning of the year that we were planning on going, and I had sent the letter to the *mairie* [French: town hall] . . . the government building to tell me where La Sone was, because it’s not on a map. It’s near Grenoble, but it’s nothing. She sends me back a letter and she puts an arrow [on a map] about where it is, but that was three months ago. That was many more months ago, before we even planned on going. We get to the village and it’s twelve o’clock again and there’s nobody in sight. I said, “Well, I don’t know what to tell you. Let me go inside.” Because this was a little bit bigger of a town, I said, “Let me go inside and find out where the school is. If I know where the school is, I’ll know where the house is.” As we were standing, this woman comes from way up the street. Woman comes from way up the street, and she stands in front of me, and she says, “*Êtes vous Madame Carson?*” [French: Are you Mrs. Carson?] Joe goes, “Did I hear what she said? Did you hear what she said?” I said, “Yes.” Anyway, why did that woman come out that specific day? How did she know my name? She had written. She had sent me the map. I never told her when I was coming. She’s the one who took me on the tour to where I lived and told me about the son’s wife who turned him in and all the events surrounding. [She] told me that there were other Jewish children living in that village and told me more about the history of the town.

Ruth: Do you know why people helped the Jews from that particular town?

⁴⁰ The “Twilight Zone” is an American science-fiction anthology television series, which ran on CBS from 1959 to 1964. It is a series of unrelated stories containing horror, science fiction, drama, psychological thriller, fantasy, and suspense, often concluding with a macabre or unexpected twist.

Lucy: This is the question that I've asked. There isn't . . . I don't know. That town was separated by a bridge. I remember going towards that bridge—you could see Germans walking up and down. It was . . . they were there. It's a risk. It's an unbelievable risk that they took.

Ruth: So many survivors with whom we've spoken have a view of humanity that's very darkly colored by their experience of only kind of meeting the sort of evil forces out there. You were one of the few that was taken in by strangers in a certain kind of way, or at least not protected in some kind of way. Do you have a more maybe balanced view of what people are, what they're made of, what we're capable of?

Lucy: What the Germans did is evil in the worst . . . this is unbelievable. I have documents where the Germans have the name and the date and the time—the time!—of when their transport left Drancy to go to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Talk about meticulous records of when you're sending somebody to their death! [It] is unbelievable. Yes, you could be bitter. After the war, when we were here—especially some of the people we met at the New World Club—they were so bitter that it consumed them. I didn't want to do that. That's a choice you have to make. That's one of the reasons also maybe that I don't want to talk about it that much.

Ruth: Did you tell your children about your experiences when they were growing up?

Lucy: Not really. No, not really. It wasn't asked and they were too young. It wasn't until later on that they found out.

Ruth: What was their reaction?

Lucy: I'm surprised that my son—who does presentations, sales in his job—and next time he calls he'll say, "Mom, guess what? I quoted you, of something you said," or, "If you could have gone through all these things, then I can manage to do this. That's not such a hardship." Yes, it's had an influence on him. He's quite a guy, my son.

John: Is there anything else you'd want to mention that we've left out?

Lucy: I could tell you some more stories.

Ruth: Please.

John: Sure.

Lucy: The Chateau des Morelles that we were in, where the rabbis lived, and you asked me how did I know. We went to there too. It was gated, completely gated. The grass was this tall. <indicates with her hand the grass was head high> It looked like [it was] completely abandoned. There was a gate that was partly open. I told Joe, I said, “Please, sneak in there. Take a picture of the house” and then . . . so I’d have something that I was here. As he got closer, he heard voices. Do you know that the lady that was there forty years ago, that cooked for us was there? She told me the story of what happened with the rabbis and the kids. This whole trip was . . . I felt like G-d was with me. [It was] an incredible journey. It was just one coincidence after another.

Ruth: Have you gone to any of the reunions of the OSE children?

Lucy: Just one. Why, I don’t know. Just . . . We went to one in Washington, D.C. They’re having one in Israel this year. Next year. Yes, this year.

Ruth: Any other memories from your trip or from . . .

Lucy: I think I’ve talked enough.

Ruth: Oh, [you are] just getting started. Can I ask you just another question about when you came to Atlanta? You came here and I happen to know that you have this large family, both of, both of Rosenbluths and Rosenbliths who had come earlier and then your aunts and your cousins . . .

Lucy: I was really here first.

Ruth: . . . and your grandfather?

Lucy: No, I came here. He’s really not my grandfather.

Ruth: He’s not your grandfather?

Lucy: Not my grandfather and my aunts are really not that close. It’s kind of a mishmash with the family. I feel very close to them because we grew up together. I was . . . I lived with them after the war [and] during the war I was with them. But Grandpa, David Rose [Rosenbluth], was really . . . my father’s father was his brother, so even Regina is not . . . but third cousin, fourth cousin, I don’t know. It doesn’t matter. We’re close.

Ruth: Did you ever feel like you were on the outskirts of that family because Regina and their parents survived and you were the one who had a very different experience? You came out of the war in a different place, I guess I would say.

Lucy: Yes, they all, everybody had their mother live. My two nephews [second cousins], Herbie and Fred, and Regina and Susie, and Sabina's daughter [had their mothers survive]. It's frightening to be by yourself. I think I was so grateful that somebody wanted to, could take care of me.

Ruth: Did you feel responsible for Betty?

Lucy: Yes.

Ruth: How did she react to kind of finding out about all this after she got old enough to understand? She was so young.

Lucy: Betty is very different. [She] has a different personality than I. Betty doesn't want to talk about it. We just never talk about it.

Ruth: When you came here, who took care of the two of you?

Lucy: An aunt.

Ruth: That was Esther?

Lucy: Yes.

Ruth: That was . . . I can't remember what his name was, Charlie?

Lucy: Charles Rose. No, Charles Rose was . . . let's not even go there. It's too confusing.

Ruth: Okay.

Lucy: Because it's family and it's not family. It's really . . . it's more of a closeness because you were together than how close you were related.

John: We appreciate that you've been willing to go through this one more time or one last time.

Lucy: You were easy to talk to.

John: Ruth was the one who was so adamant in tracking you down.

Ruth: The one thing that we don't have on the tape yet are the names of your grandsons. If you will, give a special hello to them since this is their doing when it all comes down to it. Please tell us their names, so we'll have it on the tape.

Lucy: Yes. I was thinking . . . you want a picture? Can I get a picture of them?

Ruth: We'll put a picture on later.

Lucy: Okay. Jarrod and Joshua. One is seventeen and one is fourteen now. They're great. They're the greatest.

Ruth: Okay, thank you so much.

<end disk 1>

INTERVIEW ENDS

Cuba Family Archives